

If you believe what I just stated, then *stop reading this article* because you will not agree with the information that follows. If, however, you believe that our senior leaders have rationale behind their key decisions, you may want to read on.

BRAC and Our Leaders—Directives and Intentions. A recent Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission decision is causing us to collocate two great branches. The decision is to locate the two branches at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, the current home of the FA, but it easily could

Support at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri; and Combat Service Support at Fort Lee, Virginia. To assume that all the branches associated with these centers of excellence will continue to exist as separate branches forever simply does not pass the commonsense test.

With so many branches serving in these CoEs, it is logical that reducing the number of branches would increase the Army's efficiency. Right now the Army resources and manages overhead for 19 branches, each one with an office in Human Resources Command and many with separate offices within the Army Staff to integrate their organizations and material. This is overhead our Army likely will not be able to continue to afford.

CoE Synergies. Let's first assume our leadership expects us to gain synergies by establishing these CoEs. In the fantastic article in the November-December 2005 edition, "ADA and FA: Finding Common Ground," the co-authors Colo-

nels Greg Kraak (FA) and Harry Cohen

(ADA) wrote that the two branches already share a great deal of "common ground."

The article discusses the possibility of establishing units with capabilities to fire both ADA and FA weapons. We also are in the process of forming intercept batteries that likely will have FA 13 Series and ADA 14 Series Soldiers manning systems within the same unit.

If we are already so close to integrating our units and Soldier skills, why does it scare us so to imagine that our branches may become one?

The Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) model for a CoE—for all CoEs, not just the NetFires CoE—combines like functions under the center's control. Futures, Combat Developments and Doctrine don't fall under a specific-branch school but will be combined under the CoE commander. Likewise, all common training will be consolidated at the center level. This training includes

Is It Time for the ADA and FA to Merge?

have been Fort Bliss, Texas, the current home of ADA.

The real question is, "What were the BRAC Commission's intentions in that decision?"

If you think BRAC Commission-directive for move to Fort Sill relocate similar functions, then, once again, *you can stop reading.*

Looking at the BRAC decisions with an eye toward other efforts ongoing in our Army may lead to a different conclusion. In reading the overall BRAC language carefully, the commission is not only directing the Army to move functions among our posts, camps and stations, but also to collocate similar functions to form centers of excellence (CoEs). The Army will have CoEs for Maneuver at Fort Benning, Georgia; Networked Fires at Fort Sill; Maneuver

By Colonel Mark McDonald

This is the question that's constantly being asked at all echelons. Why would such a question even be posed? After all, Field Artillery (FA) is all about force application and Air Defense Artillery (ADA) is all about force protection—we all know these branches' operating systems are fundamentally dissimilar.

Because of the differences in our branches, many think there is no question that the branches must stay separate, that the argument made in 1968 to split the branches still must be valid.

Basic Combat Training, NCO Academy, International Student Detachment, Basic Officer Leader's Course (BOLC) II (the replacement for the Officer's Basic Course, or OBC) and the Captain's Career Course (CCC).

What will remain under branch control will be branch-specific training only. For Field Artillery, that will include Advanced Individual Training (AIT), BOLC III, Basic NCO Course (BNCOC), Advanced NCO Course (ANCOC) and portions of CCC. The Air Defense Artillery will have similar courses. So in the simplest of terms, our branches' training is already merging—with only specific courses for specific weapons systems remaining separate.

One area that is not weapons-specific and that would be shared by both ADA and FA as a merged branch is effects coordination. This could become the "crown jewel" for all Soldiers and leaders in a new and combined branch. Consider, for example, that an officer in our new branch could be trained first as a leader, second as an effects coordinator (ECOORD) and lastly as a specialist in a delivery system or several closely related systems. These multi-capable officers then would be qualified to serve in all our maneuver formations as ECOORDs as well as serve on their weapons systems.

This model is similar to the way Artillerymen in both branches are tracked

today. Currently, most officers serve their first assignments based on weapons-specific training received in their OBCs. If they are to go to a unit with a different system after CCC, they may require weapons-specific training before this new assignment. The same would be true of the entire "artillery" branch—officers, NCOs and Soldiers would receive weap-

officers trained on several systems and competent in effects coordination would allow them to gain the joint and combined arms experience that is so critical for preparation for command at all levels.

Okay, so when do we merge the two branches? I am not sure exactly when, but I am sure of one thing. We can take "the bull by the horns" and move out on a plan

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ons-specific training as they needed it.

This approach would create a "level playing field" for all Artillerymen, formerly Field or Air Defense, by providing maximum opportunities to serve in maneuver formations while still having opportunities to serve in weapons-specific assignments. When our future combat systems (FCS) come on board and networked fires are realized fully, it may be feasible for a unit to have multiple Air Defense and Field Artillery attack systems collocated or possibly have multiple capabilities integrated into the same platform.

Combining our branches only will pave the way for such multi-disciplined Soldiers and leaders in lethal formations. Having

to merge the two schools and branches or we can wait until we are directed from above to implement what is clearly the Army's vision for transformation—then "play catch up." As for me, I would rather set the conditions for the success of our branches and start moving out.

If you have read this far, I congratulate you.

The possibilities I present in this article are simple and may be flawed to some degree. However, the bottom line is ultimately the same whether we implement now or later: *one day, in the not so distant future, we will be one branch.*

I urge you to take off your branch cap, put on your thinking cap and start the debate. I challenge you to write thought-provoking articles to appear in both the ADA and FA magazines. If we explore all possible synergies and potential pitfalls, our ultimate merger can only be the better for it. And, so will the Army.



Photo by Keith Pannell, the Cannoneer, Fort Sill

Sergeants David Butcher, left, and Jeremy Hartman, Warrior Leadership Course students, work on evacuating an "injured" Soldier during an exercise at Camp Eagle, Fort Sill. The ADA and FA integrated NCO Academies will combine "generic" courses, such as this one.

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